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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the self-concept of urban Western Australian Aboriginal school children, aged 11-12, in school sports settings. Most students were from the Nyoongar Aboriginal community of southwestern Western Australia. Data were collected from interviews with Aboriginal students and parents, class teachers, and sports teachers, and from observations in the school sport setting. Overall, school sports contributed favorably to Aboriginal students' self-concept and feelings about their Aboriginality. Sports activities generated enjoyment and provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their sport and physical competencies. Although males and females differed in their sports preferences, basketball was a favorite of all Aboriginal students, regardless of gender or ability. All students reported positive expectations about their ability to perform well in sports in the future. However, the school did not meet student needs to develop their sports competence. The school's potential impact outweighed its actual impact on students' self-concepts and ultimately their self-esteem. Students reported that the competence they displayed in the sports setting and the feelings generated by their participation had a powerful bearing on their confidence to identify as Aboriginals and so produced positive feelings of pride, strength, and passion about themselves. Student self-esteem was boosted by feedback from non-Aboriginal children and teachers, sports awards, demonstrated sports competence, physical competence, and social competence. (Contains 35 references.) (SV)

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SCHOOL SPORT SELF-CONCEPT

OF URBAN ABORIGINAL SCHOOL CHILDREN:

TEACHER INFLUENCES

by

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for

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Individuals may possess several self-concepts, which are dependent on context, time and place. Self-concepts arise from the perceptions individuals have about themselves. These self-perceptions are dependent on the social interactions with others and in this paper, the self-concepts of Aboriginal students in the school environment are presented. In particular, the purpose of this paper is to describe the self-concepts of urban Western Australia primary school children in school sport setting.

The significance of a favourable self-concept for urban Aboriginal children in the school setting is presented. In particular, the salient characteristics of sport for a favourable self-concept and self-esteem are presented.

Finally, practical implications are presented for the teachers to ensure that a positive teaching environment is constructed and maintained so that students have maximum opportunity to develop and foster a favourable self-concept in the school sport setting.

This paper has been prepared based on the results of a PhD study which explored the sense of self of a group of male and female, urban Western Australian, Aboriginal school children aged 11 to 12 years. Most of the students were from the Nyoongar Aboriginal community of the south-west region of Western Australia. Of particular interest in the study were students' experiences, perceptions and sense of self in the school sport achievement domain. In this paper, the term "school sport"refers to intra and inter school sport competitions as well as physical education games and activities. Data were collected from interviews with Aboriginal students, parents, class teachers and sport teachers. Non-participant observations in the school sport setting were also conducted.

In all, it was found that school sport contributed favourably to Aboriginal students' perceptions of their self-concepts, self-esteem and feelings about their Aboriginality. It was revealed that there were several elements that contributed to their positive self-views and these will be presented in this paper. Practical solutions are presented in order to construct the most appropriate teaching environment suited to the development and enhancement of Aboriginal students' school sport self-concept.

A sense of self refers to a collection of self-concepts, which are dependent on time, place, context and most importantly the aspects that individual considers salient to him/her self. A self-concept refers to the knowledge, ideas and beliefs possessed about the self and is comprised of descriptions, values and expectations (Hattie, 1992). Self-esteem on the other hand refers to the evaluations and judgments made of one's self-concept (Mussen, Conger & Kagan, 1984).

According to popular "self" theorists, a sense of self represents a holistic and global representation of the self. It possesses a hierarchical structure which contains multiple selves and thereby multiple self-concepts and self-esteem (Fox, 1992; Harter, 1978, 1980,

1985; Hattie, 1992). In this paper, Aboriginal students' self-concepts and self-esteem in the school sport environment are presented.

Aboriginal students revealed that participation in school sport impacted favourably upon the descriptions and ideas used to determine their self-concepts. More specifically, Aboriginal students' self-concepts were described in positive terms which consisted of descriptions of their attributes, qualities and skills. These descriptions were fairly stable over time.

Aboriginal students viewed themselves positively when participating in sport because they were involved in an activity that appealed to them and which generated enjoyment and provided opportunities to demonstrate their sport and physical competence. Sport competence refers to team tactics, rules, strategies and sport specific skills. Physical competence refers to running, throwing, agility, speed, accuracy and jumping for instance.

Enjoyment and attraction of team sports was particularly noted among the self-concepts of Aboriginal school children. A difference in gender was revealed since males preferred basketball, baseball, football and tee ball, while females enjoyed volleyball, netball and basketball, tee ball and track running. A common finding was the attraction to basketball by all students, regardless of gender and demonstrated sport and physical competence.

Sport was viewed by Aboriginal students as a place to demonstrate their competence. It is important to note that all students, even those who were assessed as possessing average and below average sport skills, expressed their confidence in the sport domain to tackle tasks put before them. Those students, however, who possessed average to above average levels of demonstrated sport skill, expressed their confidence to produce an outcome or display more skill than what was required. Aboriginal students expressed their hunger for complicated tasks which encompassed real life

situations with fast paced games and competition with unknown opponents. It seemed that school sport provided opportunities to demonstrate physical competence but lacked some opportunities for students to display and develop their sport comptence.

Regardless of actual demonstrated sport and physical competence and gender, all students perceived that their potential to perform in the future was favourable. No students reported any negative or unfavourable expectations to perform in the future. Students' perceptions of their sport and physical competence impacted on their actual demonstrated sport and physical competence. In other words, those students who possessed average to above average levels of sport and physical competence, expected to perform at a higher standard than what was required of them. In terms of their actual demonstrated sport and physical competence, average to above average students displayed sport skills and physical capabilities equivalent to their expectations.

Students' descriptions of their self-concepts in the school sport context contained statements that were definite and which remained stable over the school year. In other words, there was little use of adjectives to describe themselves and their sport competence. Furthermore, the descriptions of self-concepts remained fairly stable over time. The environment was controlled such that there was little variation in the activities, sports and games made available to students. Hence, the information presented to students about their self-concepts in the school sport environment was controlled particularly by the level of experience, qualification and willingness of the teachers delivering sport to students. This is an important finding because teachers possessed direct control of the information students used to describe and evaluate their self-concepts.

In the case of Naples Primary School, it was revealed that students' needs in the sport setting were not entirely catered for. The potential impact that the school possessed outweighed the actual impact on Aboriginal students' self-concepts and ultimately their self-esteem. Students reported that the competence they displayed in the sport setting and the feelings generated from their participation had a powerful bearing on their confidence to identify as Aboriginals and so

produced positive feelings of pride, strength and passion about themselves.

More specifically, the development of students' sport competence was not appropriately catered for. Aboriginal students wanted to learn new sports, rules, tactics and strategies specific for a number of team sports. Instead however, mostly their present physical capabilities (such as running and throwing) were encouraged.

The physical education teacher, Miss Quill reflected on the impact of school sport upon students:

> I think they [Aboriginal students] sort of feel repressed in the classroom... it's boring and it's heavy and it's just there. And they really struggle they're very very weak most of them. And I think they just love coming out I mean and playing sport. And it's a social thing and interacting with other kids [italics added]. Run around and scream and yell and release all that yeah. And you forget about all the other stresses of the world (Miss Quill SCRIPT 2, 1125-1161).

There were several features of sport that attracted students and thus impacted upon their self-concepts. Aboriginal students , for instance, reported that sport was important because of the: (a) need to experience pleasure and enjoyment, (b) need to engage in active participation, (c) need to work with teammates and share and cooperate in a team manner, (d) opportunities to demonstrate their sport and physical competence and, (e) opportunities to receive awards. Refer to figure 1.

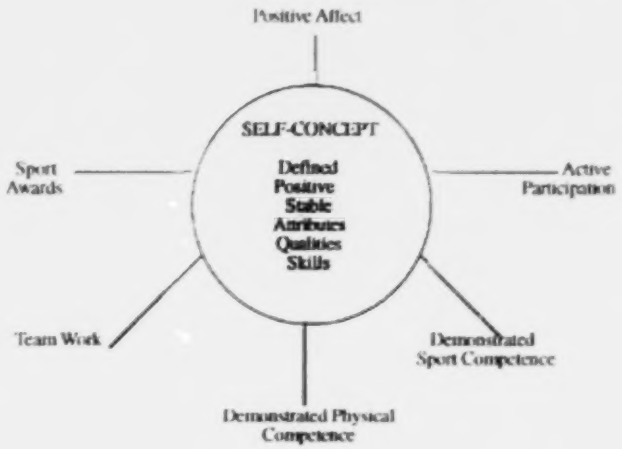

Figure 1. Salient Features of School Sport Upon Aboriginal Self-concepts.

Aboriginal students reported that they experienced mostly fun and pleasure from participation in school sports. It must be noted however, that physical education was the least enjoyed and least preferred activity. Inter school competitions were the most preferred school sport activity since students had the opportunities to test their skill against unfamiliar opponents. See figure 2 and table 1.

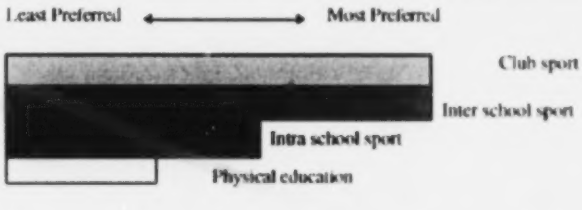

Figure 2. Diagrammatic Representation of Student Preferences of School Sport

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Physical Education	Intra School Sport
Disliked coed competition No choice in activities Team sport tactics are not taught Team sport rules are not taught Boring and simple activities and games No challenge to sport competence Lack of opportunity for active participation Lack of opportunity for team sports games No teaching of new sport skills	Actual team sport games played More time for active participation Small challenge to sport competence Opportunity to socialise with friends Small degree of competition
Inter School Sport	**Club Sport**
Competition against unfamiliar opponents Challenges to sport competence Release from class and work Less opportunity to experience tormentfrom peers	Increased opportunities to socialise Make new friends Constant challenges Encouragement of new sport skills Opportunity to play regular rules with adult sized equipment More opportunities to display sport competence More competitors

Active participation was another reported element of sport that impacted on Aboriginal students' self-concepts. Students stated that particular sports provided them the opportunities to be actively involved in a fast paced game. Basketball was noted as a preferred sport because:

> There's more running involved and, like you can pass the ball around. And you're not just standing out in the field or something. And all the rest [other sports] they're like slow, they're not like fast when you're playing basketball you get the ball thrown to ya and you share it around and all that (Kellie SCRIPT 2, 185-199).

Sports that did not encourage active participation such as those activities that require one gross limb movement (such as catching a tennis ball in a stationary position) or those that required students to stand in line for their turn (such as leader ball), were perceived as useless and contributed to students' boredom. Students reported that physical education classes contained such games and activities and was therefore the least preferred type of sport experienced at school.

The positive feelings generated from sport was an outcome of mere participation which was experienced by all students regardless of their level of sport and/or physical competence. The types of positive affect experienced consisted of self-like, pride (as an Aboriginal person) and enjoyment.

Awards such as trophies, ribbons and certificates were often received by Aboriginal students and were perceived to provide recognition of their sporting achievements and thereby provided evidence of their dominance in sport to others. Awards were perceived as a tool for Aboriginal students to dispel the negative Aboriginal stereotypes, prove their worthiness and feel proud of their Aboriginality. These awards were a salient feature of Aboriginal students' self-concepts in the school sport context.

Team dynamics were another valued element of sport that contributed to Aboriginal students' self-concepts. Team dynamics refer to acts between members of the same team and

which occurred on the sport field. These acts included possessing a common team goal, cohesion, sharing, cooperation, helping and working together to achieve a common outcome. It was strongly communicated that individual acts of sport "brilliance" were not valued by Aboriginal students unless it was absolutely called for during sport competitions. It was appropriate to display an act of excellence during inter school sport competitions but not during intra and physical education because students reported that they were representing the school during inter school sport competitions. Furthermore, it was perceived that inter school sport was a legitimate competition, whereas intra school sport and physical education was merely "just a game between friends."

A special or extraordinary display of competence consisted of displaying an individual skill or play that produced an advantage for the team as a whole. Acts such as taking a spectacular mark, kicking a goal from a long distance, or making a great tackle in football constituted an outstanding feat. The school's football coach said the following about an Aboriginal student named Chris who played on the school football team: "He knows when the team's in trouble and he has to play a little bit of individual stuff and I know that he can share the ball when its required" (Mr Davin SCRIPT 1, 114-116). Mr Davin's comments were reflective of all the Aboriginal male students in the school football team. They all possessed the ability to play within the team structure as well as outside the team structure when required (Mr Davin SCRIPT 1, 89-147, SCRIPT 2, 254-270, 958-969, 1259-1273).

Aboriginal females however, primarily played a team role when competing in inter school netball games. Dashes of individual brilliances were less obvious during sport competitions. It is assumed that Aboriginal females tended to value team comradeship and thereby did not display behaviours or skills that altered the team balance.

Finally, sport was perceived as an important element of students' self-concepts because of the opportunities to demonstrate their sport and physical competence. Aboriginal students believed that Aboriginal people in general, dominated in sport. This is evident in Aboriginal students' perceptions of their role models. The majority of students preferred

Aboriginal sport role models because of their demonstrated competence (Carl SCRIPT 1, 563-577; Chris SCRIPT 1, 1114-1125; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 294-301; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 620-620) and style of play (Carl SCRIPT 2, 818-828). More importantly though, role models provided positive images about Aboriginal people to the wider community. Demonstration of sport competence by role models also made students feel proud about their Aboriginality and demonstrated that sport provided an opportunity for Aborigines to prove their worth and thus gain acceptance and equality from the wider society (Heather SCRIPT 3, 171-186; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 378-388; 824-832). Heather stated the following:

> They're [Cathy Freeman and Nova Peris-Kneebone] good Nyoongars, and they and they show 'em [non-Aboriginal people and particularly Pauline Hanson] how good they are at sport. And they're making the Nyoongar other peoples feel proud and that, about their colour (Heather SCRIPT 1, 892-893, 895-896).

With this in mind, Aboriginal students view sport as an important part of their self-concept because of the positive and favourable images portrayed by their sport role models about their Aboriginal identity.

A consistent finding of the study was Aboriginal students reported sport participation impacted most strongly on their Aboriginal identity. For instance, sport provided opportunities for them to seek equality and experience pride as Aborigines. Sport in this sense was a tool that was utilised by all students to determine social positions within the school environment. For Aboriginal students, this provided a critical approach to gaining acceptance from their peers as well as the rest of the school population (including students and staff). They reported that they

dominated school sport competitions. The following responses reveal the importance of sport for Aboriginal students in gaining acceptance and equality through sport:

> Nyoongars don't think they're better than everyone and Wadjallahs they're just because they like score a goal or something they think they're good and all that and they think they're better than Nyoongars. But they're not (Kellie SCRIPT 2, 368-371, 373-374).

> All white kids like not good at stuff like Barney, he can't hit the tee ball. Gordon, he can't hit the ball. Troy, he can't hit the ball and Gordon can't kick. White people can't kick but Aboriginals, nearly all Aboriginals can kick. Even when they're little(Trevor SCRIPT1, 1434-1434, 1437-1438, 1440-1440, 1442-1445).

Perhaps the downfall was that Aboriginal students perceived that their Aboriginality was sometimes determined by others (significant and generalised) in terms of their demonstrated sport and physical competence and participation. In other words, Aboriginal students felt that other students believed that if they were not as good as other Aboriginal students in sport, then their identity was questioned. Whether or not this actually occurred is irrelevant since these perceptions form part of the information used by Aboriginal students to form their self-concepts. In sum, a direct link was found between students' school sport self-concepts and their Aboriginal identity. This is an important finding since students identity can be postively influenced via the use of sport in the school setting. The implications upon Aboriginal students' attendance, retention and achievement may result in favourable outcomes.

Self-esteem arises from the evaluations and judgments individuals make about their self-concepts. In the case of urban Aboriginal students, their collective self-esteem reflected their self-concepts. They evaluated themselves more positively when they played organised and competitive sport (intra and inter school sport) than any other activity at school (including physical education) (Carl SCRIPT 1, 1191-1201, SCRIPT 2, 948-963; Chris SCRIPT 1, 797-821; Heather SCRIPT 1, 1226-1242; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 824-832, Sean SCRIPT 2, 178-189, 621-631; Trevor SCRIPT 1, 1222-1229; Wendy SCRIPT 3, 332-336). Students responses to the question of "What do you do that makes you feel good about yourself?" were as follows:

> Play basketball. Cause that's just what I like. Play football. Cause that's another sport I like(Carl SCRIPT 2, 948-963).
>
> Oh go and play with my friends. Play games. Oh just basket run and dunk. And run and gun (Chris SCRIPT 1, 797-821).
>
> When I play sport and I play it good (Heather SCRIPT 1, 1227-1229).
>
> Basketball. Cause like I like to do a lot of running. And you can like play as a team. And you that's like you can make more friends (Kellie SCRIPT 1/2, 184-197).
>
> And she's [Taylor] happy. And when she do good at sports that's when she's really happy. She come home so proud of herself telling us everything (Ms R & Ms Eaton SCRIPT 1, 19-23).
>
> When I play games and I. Footy and I kick a goal, or I get best player or, play tee ball and get a home run, or play soccer or we win, play footy when we win, play tee ball when we win, play soccer when we win (Trevor SCRIPT 1, 1226-1229).

For Sean, the importance of sport participation for his well being was explained by Mr Trevin who was an Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker at the school:

> There's no great outbursts [on the sport

> field]. He's just not a, he's just not interested in being in the classroom, that's all there is to it. I think if he can just, run around playing football all day, or pinball machines he'd be happy (Trevin SCRIPT 1/2, 537-568).

Regardless of gender and level of demonstrated sport competence, Aboriginal students evaluated themselves with much precision (Carl, SCRIPT 1, 720-750, Chris SCRIPT 2, 338-361; Heather SCRIPT, SCRIPT 3, 376-388; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 437-444; Sean SCRIPT 2, 226-236; Taylor SCRIPT 1/1, 889-893; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 351-366; Wendy SCRIPT 3, 391-474). In other words, their judgments of their actual sport competence was accurately described when compared to the assessments made by students' respective sport teachers as well as the observations made by the researcher.

Students favoured themselves when participating in team sports. Females for example, rated their competence highly in netball and basketball (Heather SCRIPT 3, 364-367; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 437-444; Taylor SCRIPT 1/2, 742-744; Wendy SCRIPT 1, 1000-1011) and males evaluated themselves highly in football and basketball (Carl SCRIPT 1, 720-750, 835-861, 863-867, 1307-1309; Chris SCRIPT 2, 92-93; Sean SCRIPT 1, 218-223; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 351-366).

Gender differences were revealed in the detail students used to determine their self-esteem. For instance, males' self-esteem statements contained evaluations of specific sport skills, abilities and qualities and contained more adjectives than those of females:

> I'm a stronger marker [in Australian RulesFootball]. I'm stronger. I can tackle better (Sean SCRIPT 2, 266-266, 269-269).

> If we play on one on one [in basketball]. I'llbeat 'em (Carl SCRIPT 2, 762-763).

I share the ball around and that. And pass it (Chris SCRIPT 2, 354-354, 356-

356).

Females' self-esteem contained less description of specific sport skills. Their self-esteem was defined in very broad and

general terms:

> I'm good at sports (Kellie SCRIPT 1, 931-931).
>
> I can beat two boys and one girl (Wendy SCRIPT 2/1, 118-119).
>
> I can play [netball] properly (Taylor SCRIPT1/1, 893-893).

A reason for this difference in males' and females' self-esteem may be linked to the quantity and quality of information students received from their respective sports teachers and coaches regarding their sport performances. (This is detailed further in the discussion).

There were four valued sources that students used to assess and determine their self-esteem in the school sport setting and these included feedback, sports awards, demonstrated sport competence, physical competence and social competence. Refer to figure 3.

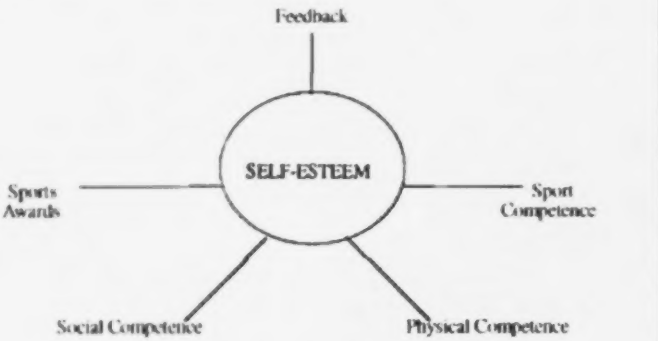

Figure 3. Salient Characteristics School Sport That Impinged Upon Aboriginal Students' Self-esteem.

The most salient source for esteem was the feedback received from non-Aboriginal children and teachers. There were two forms of feedback: (a) appraisals and, (b) self-referent feedback. Appraisals refer to the statements others made about Aboriginal students' sport performances. Appraisals contained positive information about students' overall sport performances or the exercise of a particular skill.

In this study, limited differences were reported in the quality and quantity of the appraisals received from teachers when compared to non-Aboriginal students. Appraisals supplied by teachers were often given immediately and followed a desired performance or display of exceptional skill. It was given directly to the student involved and often in front of an audience of other students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) (Carl SCRIPT 863-867, SCRIPT 2, 481-515; Heather SCRIPT 2, 177-191; Taylor SCRIPT 1/2, 769-773; Trevor SCRIPT 1/2, 297-312).

Appraisals supplied by non-Aboriginal students were given directly and immediately following successful performances, displays of skill or when a desired or favourable sport outcome (team win, score a goal or hit a home run) was reached (Carl SCRIPT 1, 863-867; Heather SCRIPT 1, 232-239, 294-320, Kellie SCRIPT 1/2, 445-448, 478-483, SCRIPT 2, 513-518, Trevor SCRIPT 1, 1391-1402).

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Aboriginal students also received feedback from other Aboriginal students. On average, this consisted mostly of teasing each other about an unfavourable sport outcome. It was revealed that regardless of demonstrated sport competence, all Aboriginal males engaged in teasing one another. Highly sport competent Aboriginal females however, only teased other highly competent Aboriginal students (both males and females) (Carl PORS 1, 2; Chris PORS 1, 2; Chris SCRIPT 2, 1-41, 47-62; Heather PORS 1, 2; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 118-130, 317-326; Sean SCRIPT 2, 284-362).

Self-referent forms of feedback refer to students assessing their current demonstrated sport competence based on their own previous sport competence or that of significant others. It was found that Aboriginal females compared themselves with other females (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). Comparisons with others were common among Aboriginal females who possessed low or unfavourable self-esteem in the school sport setting (Heather SCRIPT 1, 277-285, 1188-1192; Wendy (SCRIPT 1, 1002-1007, SCRIPT 2/1, 114-140). It was revealed however, that highly competent Aboriginal males engaged in a form of self-comparison comparing their demonstrated sport competence with previous displays of sport competence (Chris SCRIPT 1, 743-761; Sean SCRIPT 1, 916-921).

Extrinsic rewards (such as sports awards and sports roles) were another highly valued element of school sport that influenced Aboriginal students' self-esteem. Extrinsic rewards consisted of trophies, ribbons and certificates for demonstrated sport performances as well as gaining leadership roles. Rewards were an essential part of Aboriginal students' self-esteem because of the impact upon their Aboriginal identity. It was found that Aboriginal students perceived that rewards were valuable to disproving negative Aboriginal stereotypes (Carl SCRIPT 1, 1210-1250) and proving self-worth (Chris SCRIPT 1, 1034-1056; Heather SCRIPT 1, 263-274). Rewards provided the opportunity to experience positive affect in the form of pride (Chris SCRIPT 1, 1034-1056; Heather SCRIPT 1, 1226-1242, 1582-1595; Wendy SCRIPT 3, 820-851) and made them feel better about themselves as Aborigines. The following quote by Carl showed the value of rewards in sport for Aboriginal students:

> It [trophy] shows that Aboriginals are not what they seem. Only some are stupid, act like idiots. Like sniff glue or they drink alcohol (Carl SCRIPT 1,1220-1221, 1242-1242, 1246-1246, 1250-1250).

In contrast however, only the highly sport competent Aboriginal students utilised rewards to determine their self-esteem, particularly when gaining leadership roles. This is because in this case, leadership roles such as sport captain, vice captain and sport councillor were used as tools by teachers as a form of encouraging positive behaviours. When students exhibited undesirable behaviours, then their roles were taken from them. In the following quote, the importance of sport is reported by Kellie:

> I used to follow her [Heather] everywhere like get in trouble with her, last year. But. Cause we used to be in the office every day gettin' jarred and all that. Because we were all following Heather around when she was fighting, like making all the trouble. She's the only one who gets in trouble but not that much. Cause like I'm student councillor and sports captain. And I don't want to get into trouble because otherwise I'll lose both those jobs (Kellie SCRIPT 1/1, 1142- 1186).

For highly sport competent students it could be said that they were more often in receipt of rewards than other students. An Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker, Miss Curry made the following statement about a highly sport competent student named Kellie:

> She's always getting awards for, like she's a captain for her faction and. And you know she gets the, awards for winning at the sports carnivals and stuff like that [italics added] (Ms Curry SCRIPT 2/1, 1048-1049, 1051-1052).

It is important to note that such situations cause concern since such students may begin to rely on extrinsic rewards as a major source for self-esteem within the school sport environment. If performances are not always rewarded then how will the student cope with not receiving a valued contribution toward their self-esteem?

Sport competence is another valued element that contributes to Aboriginal students' self-esteem. It was revealed that several components comprise sport competence and included: (a) team game skills such as a tackle or mark in football (Carl SCRIPT 2, 896-905; Sean SCRIPT 1, 929-932; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 512-541), (b) knowledge of the game(s) (Wendy SCRIPT 2/1, 154-185), (c) overall game performance (Taylor SCRIPT 1/1, 889-893), (d) ability to achieve a favourable sport outcome such as kicking a goal in football, shooting a goal in netball or hitting a home run in tee ball) (Sean SCRIPT 1, 935-938) and, (e) motivation to be physically involved in the game (Sean SCRIPT 2, 226-236).

Physical competence refers to capabilities such as running (speed and agility), throwing (accuracy) and body strength (Heather SCRIPT 2, 224-225; Sean SCRIPT 2, 263-272; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 89-129; Wendy SCRIPT 2/1, 154-185). Physical competence was reported as the most valued element of self-esteem followed by the demonstration of essential sport skills. Males valued these items more than females.

Social competence is the final salient feature of school sport to contribute to Aboriginal students' self-esteem and refers to elements that ensured a balanced and cohesive team environment. In other words, team work, sharing and cooperation were highly valued elements of social competence for all Aboriginal students regardless of gender (Chris SCRIPT 2, 338-361; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 437-444).

Observations revealed however, that highly skilled Aboriginal students were often voted for roles of authority by their peers (such as captain) or placed in specific playing positions on the sport field. Aboriginal students acknowledged this and acted accordingly to ensure a balanced and cohesive team environment. In other words, highly skill Aboriginal students utilised the opportunities to demonstrate and encourage team work, sharing and cooperation among their team members.

Teachers have an enormous potential to provide information for Aboriginal students' self-concepts in the school sport environment. At Naples Primary School, the physical education teacher held the position of sport specialist yet assistance to deliver sport to students was shared with the year 6 and 7 class teachers, Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker, Special Needs' Teachers and the gardener. With the exception of Mr Davin the gardener, the overall qualification and level of experience coaching and teaching children in sport was not at an acceptable level in order to develop Aboriginal students' current skills, nor encourage the future potential of Aboriginal students.

Mr Davin possessed 25 years experience teaching and coaching juniors in basketball, football and cricket in the local school's district. He was also a life member of the local sport clubs of all the sports he coached. The physical education teacher however, was not trained in physical education nor did she she possess sport specific training for the sports she taught. The class teachers who delivered intra school sport did not have the appropriate sport specific training for the sports they taught either. Only one class teacher possessed a sport specific coaching certificate for netball. In other cases, staff such as the AIEW and Special Needs' Teachers assisted in coaching, training and umpiring inter and intra school sport, yet their combined experience and qualification was not appropriate.

In terms of Aboriginal students' self-concepts, the information available to them was limited by the lack of experience, qualification and current training of the staff who taught and delivered school sport. A point was made earlier in this paper that revealed the lack of difference between non-Aboriginal students' and teachers' appraisals of Aboriginal sport performances. This is of concern since feedback from adult significant others (teachers and other staff) provided a major source of self-esteem for Aboriginal students (Carl SCRIPT 1, 863-867, SCRIPT 2, 485-515; Kellie SCRIPT 1/2, 1122-1134). It may be that due to the lack of qualification and

experience, teachers were ill equipped to provide appropriate sport specific feeck to students. Furthermore, some staff may not have valued sport as much as Aboriginal students and thereby did not put in the effort and motivation students wanted from them.

Although Aboriginal students reported favourable self-concepts and self-esteem in the school sport domain, the potential influence possessed by the school has not been tapped. In order to provide a positive environment in which to develop and foster Aboriginal students' self-concepts and self-esteem, a *learning environment* that encourages students to *strive for excellence*, *experience challenges* and a sense of *personal accomplishment*. must be provided. Refer to table 2 for a list of practical recommendations.

For highly sport competent students it could be said that they were more often in receipt of rewards than other students. An Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker, Miss Curry made the following statement about a highly sport competent student named Kellie:

> She's always getting awards for, like she's a captain for her faction and. And you know she gets the, awards for winning at the sports carnivals and stuff like that [italics added] (Ms Curry SCRIPT 2/1, 1048-1049, 1051-1052).

It is important to note that such situations cause concern since such students may begin to rely on extrinsic rewards as a major source for self-esteem within the school sport environment. If performances are not always rewarded then how will the student cope with not receiving a valued contribution toward their self-esteem?

Sport competence is another valued element that contributes to Aboriginal students' self-esteem. It was revealed that several components comprise sport competence and included: (a) team game skills such as a tackle or mark in football (Carl SCRIPT 2, 896-905; Sean SCRIPT 1, 929-932; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 512-541), (b) knowledge of the game(s) (Wendy SCRIPT 2/1, 154-185), (c) overall game performance (Taylor SCRIPT 1/1, 889-893), (d) ability to achieve a favourable sport outcome such as kicking a goal in

football, shooting a goal in netball or hitting a home run in tee ball) (Sean SCRIPT 1, 935-938) and, (e) motivation to be physically involved in the game (Sean SCRIPT 2, 226-236).

Physical competence refers to capabilities such as running (speed and agility), throwing (accuracy) and body strength (Heather SCRIPT 2, 224-225; Sean SCRIPT 2, 263-272; Trevor SCRIPT 2, 89-129; Wendy SCRIPT 2/1, 154-185). Physical competence was reported as the most valued element of self-esteem followed by the demonstration of essential sport skills. Males valued these items more than females.

Social competence is the final salient feature of school sport to contribute to Aboriginal students' self-esteem and refers to elements that ensured a balanced and cohesive team environment. In other words, team work, sharing and cooperation were highly valued elements of social competence for all Aboriginal students regardless of gender (Chris SCRIPT 2, 338-361; Kellie SCRIPT 2, 437-444).

Observations revealed however, that highly skilled Aboriginal students were often voted for roles of authority by their peers (such as captain) or placed in specific playing positions on the sport field. Aboriginal students acknowledged this and acted accordingly to ensure a balanced and cohesive team environment. In other words, highly skill Aboriginal students utilised the opportunities to demonstrate and encourage team work, sharing and cooperation among their team members.

The purpose of this paper was to present the self-concepts and self-esteem of 11-12 year Aboriginal school children. In particular students' descriptions and evaluations of themselves in the school sport domain were presented. Overall, it was found that school sport contributed favourably to students' self-concepts and self-esteem.

Salient characteristics of school sport were featured in self-concepts. For instance, Aboriginal students reported that active participation, demonstration of sport competence, positive affect, display of physical competence, team work and sport awards were valued. Collectively, other studies (Gill, Gross and Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz and Weiss, 1985; Klint and Weiss, 1986; Longhurst & Spink, 1987; Passer, 1982; Spink and Longhurst, 1990; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989) found that other populations of children and teenagers (mostly North American) valued affiliation, skill development, success, status, excitement and fitness.

Gender differences were revealed in the above mentioned studies. For instance, females valued the social elements of sport whereas, males valued the development and demonstration of sport skill. In the current study of Aboriginal students, it was revealed that both males and females valued sport for its social and skill components.

Self-concept characteristics	**Practicalities**
Pleasure/enjoyment	Organise basketball competitions
Active participation	Less stationary skills
Team dynamics	Teach new sport skills
Sport Competence	Develop reward

	system for whole school
Extrinsic Rewards	Include surrouding school community
	Use Aboriginal role models
	Teach complex sport skills
	Develop existing sport skills
	Encourage sharing, cooperation and
	team work
	Develop team cohesion/ group
	pride/school pride
	Less use of extrinsic rewards for individuals
	Develop team/group/school rewards
	Staff training in general coaching principles and sport specific coaching prinicples
	On going Staff professional Development and assessment
	Use of appropriate team uniforms
	and equipment
Self-esteem characteristics	**Practicalities**
Feedback -Appraisals	More detail in information supplied Give corrective instruction

-Self-referent	Encourage this form of self-comparison Assist students in individual goal setting
	Chart their progress or use log journals Discourage comparisons with others
Roles	Rotate roles to include all students
Rewards	Do not give rewards all the time, use sparingly so that students don't rely on them
Sport Competence	Develop team skills, tactics, rules Develop physical capabilities Demonstrate teacher motivation
Social Competence	Develop and encourage team dynamics
	such as sharing, cooperation, cohesion.

A major find of the current study was a direct relation between school sport and Aboriginal identity. For instance, Aboriginal students valued sport because of the opportunities to experience something positive about their Aboriginality. Support for the value of is provided by adult Aboriginal athletes participating in mainstream elite sports. For instance, several Australian Rules Footballers, former state basketballer Ernie Dingo and Olympic Games medallits, Cathy Freeman have stated that sport is a way to gain

acceptance and equality from members of the majority society (Cadigan, 1989; Coolwell, 1992; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 1992; McGregor, 1998; Sport in Aboriginal Society, n.d,: Tatz, 1984, 1987, 1994, 1995; Tatz & Tatz, 1996; Tatz, Ramsey, Stocks, Bass, Winkler, Eva, Quayle, & Blake, 1998).

Regardless of gender or level of sport and physical competence, all Aboriginal students reported that school sport provided a positive and favourable option in which to identify with their parent culture. Sport was not important only for skill development but vital to gaining acceptance and equality from the majority members of the school community. Sport provided opportunities (via social interactions) for Aboriginal students to feel proud of their identity.

Cooperative social skills (team work, cohesion, cooperation, sharing, helping) were consistently featured in the self-concepts of both male and female Aboriginal students, regadless of their level of sport and physical competence. In other studies however, Marsh and Peart (1988) found that competitive sport lowered students' concepts of their physical abilities whereas cooperative sport enhanced students' concepts. In the present study of Aboriginal students, social skills were important to students' self-concepts regardless of the type of sport programme offered.

In another study by Klint and Weiss (1986), it was found that the level of sport competence affected the value students placed upon cooperative social skills. More specifically, only those students high in perceived sport competence valued cooperative social skills. For Aboriginal students, the level of sport competence did not have a bearing on the value placed upon social skills in sport.

Despite gender or level of sport and physical competence, the personal judgments Aboriginal students made of their self-concepts in the context of school sport contained evaluations that were positive, accurate and specific. Perhaps the most interesting and important finding was that 11 to 12 year old Aboriginal students assessed themselves accurately. This finding was not replicated by others (Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Fehr, 1990). For instance, Campbell (1990) found

that individuals with low self-esteem were less stable in their self-descriptions and were less confident and indecisive about themselves than individuals with high self-esteem. In another study, Campbell and Fehr (1990) found that individuals with low self-esteem described themselves in negative terms but were accurate in their evaluations of themselves. Individuals with high self-esteem however, judged themselves in positive terms but their self-assessments were exaggerated when compared to that made by an independent observer.

The elements of school sport that contributed to Aboriginal students' self-esteem were feedback, rewards, social and sport competence. The most consistently reported source of self-esteem were appraisals. Harter (1978, 1980, 1985) stated that feedback is used specifically by children to evaluate themselves and form their self-esteem. In the case of Aboriginal students, males' received feedback from their male coach which contained information about their skills as well as general praise and encouragement. Aboriginal females however, did not receive as much information about their skills, but rather praise and encouragement. As a result, Aboriginal females did not receive as much information about their sport competence as males and thereby possessed less information in which to ascertain their self-esteem.

The impact of coaches feedback upon self-esteem has been reported by Horn (1985), Smith, Smoll and Curtis (1979), Horn and Hasbrook (1987), Sinclair and Vealey (1989) and Black and Weiss (1992). Collectively, these studies revealed that feedback which contains information (constructive criticism) as well as praise and encouragement has a positive influence upon childrens' self-judgments and thus their self-esteem.

In conclusion, it is important to note that although students' reported somewhat positive and favourable views of themselves in school sport, it must be acknowledged that the teaching environment and the sports available did not impact upon Aboriginal self-esteem and self-concept as it could have. School sport has a positive influence upon students' identity and feelings toward their Aboriginality. This was demonstrated by the use of extrinsic rewards, demonstration of sport and physical competence, opportunities to experience

positive affect (pride) and gain leadership roles.

Aboriginal students perceived that school sport provided opportunities that enabled them to dispel negative Aboriginal stereotypes, develop a strong and favourable concept of their Aboriginality, seek feelings of acceptance, equality and pride. It has been reported that urban Aboriginal school children who attend a mainstream school develop an identity conflict (Partington & McCudden, 1992). It is further argued that confusion sets in about their sense of self and sense of belonging (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1988). How can an Aboriginal child learn and achieve if he/she does not feel comfortable about his/her identity and sense of belonging in the school achievement domain? If educators acknowledge the importance of students' Aboriginal identity and make use of its relationship with self-concept and school sport, then issues of truancy, absenteeism, achievement and behaviour may be appropriately assessed and culturally addressed. Opportunities must exist that ensure school sport is a positive and valued contributor towards urban Aboriginal students' self-concept. It it therefore imperative that educators and educational institutions give school sport the same valuable consideration as that given by Aboriginal students.

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